

DHH/mm

20 January 1950

Lt Colonel B. M. Brothers, Cav
Committee No 1
Research and Evaluation Division
The Armored School
Fort Knox, Kentucky

Dear Brothers:

The following comments are in answer to your letter of 7 November 1949. These comments are drawn from memory and may vary slightly with actual dates. The following numbered paragraphs refer to the corresponding paragraphs of your letter of 7 November:

1. CCR 14th Armored Division consisted of the following troops:
Headquarters CCR
19th AIB
47th Tank Battalion
94th Reconnaissance Squadron (less 3 troops)
1 Signal Section of the 154th Signal Company
B-125th Engineer Battalion
B-136th Ordnance Battalion
499th AFA Battalion (for information regarding additional supporting artillery see Colonel M. Kurts, Division Artillery Officer).
2. An attempted German break-through in the Hatten-Rittershofen area.
3. Oral order received from CG 14th AD to rescue the 2nd Battalion 315th Infantry (79th Division) surrounded in Hatten.
4. CCR received the Division attack order (oral) at 2100 hours on 12 January 1945. CCR was closing in an area about 25 kilometers from Hatten at this hour. The 19th AIB had been released from a front line position near Mouterhous early that morning. Two battalions had been fighting constantly since early 1 January 1945. The hour of attack was given as 0800 hours 13 January 1945. This meant that CCR must march an additional 25 kilometers at night, over icy roads, and attack without making a reconnaissance. All troops were battle weary. No replacements had been received since the last major engagement.

5. CCR attached at 0800 hours 13 January 1945. LD was edge of woods about 750 yards south of Hatten. This line was held lightly by elements of the 42nd Division (Regimental Commander - Colonel Caum).

6. 47th Tank Battalion (on the right) and the 19th AIB (on the left) to attack at 0800 hours 13 January 1945, assault Hatten and rescue the remnant of the 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry (79th Division).

7. Yes. March was completed at 1200 hours 13 January 1945. One hundred and fourteen men of the 2nd Battalion, 315th Infantry (79th Division) were evacuated from Hatten during furious fighting. At 1400 hours a heavy German counter-attack forced CCR to withdraw to the LD.

8. At 1500 hours, 13 January 1945, the Division Commander issued an oral order to CCR to attack without delay, drive the enemy from Hatten and secure the forts in the Maginot Line North of Hatten.

9. Due to the extremely heavy small arms, mortar, tank, anti-tank and artillery fire falling in the area of CCR, I decided to delay the attack until dusk. The Light Tank Company of the 94th Reconnaissance Squadron (12 tanks) and two companies of the 47th Tank Battalion (23 tanks) were assembled in the woods 800 yards South of Hatten. The remaining combat troops of the 62nd AIB were loaded on these 35 tanks under the command of the Battalion Commander of the 62nd AIB (Major Forrest Green) at 1700 hours 13 January 1945. These tanks, loaded with the Infantry, dashed into Hatten at top speed. The Infantry dismounted and was engaged in a bitter house to house fight within a matter of minutes. All but one platoon of medium tanks were ordered out of Hatten after discharging the Armored Infantry that they were carrying. No tanks were lost during this trip. Three men were injured by small arms fire during the ride into Hatten. By 2400 hours 13 January 1945 our attack lost its momentum. About three-fourths of the town of Hatten was then in our hands. Seventy-three casualties were incurred by the Armored Infantry during the house to house fight prior to 2400 hours on 13 January 1945. Three of the five tanks that had been left in Hatten were knocked out and were replaced immediately. One hundred and twenty-six Germans were captured. Ninety-one dead Germans were found in that portion of Hatten held by CCR at 2400 hours on 13 January 1945.

10. CCA and CCB were engaged at Rittershofen and the area Northwest of Rittershofen prior to the arrival of CCR. The attacks of CCA and CCB had been stopped by the enemy. Both CCA and CCB were ordered to resume their attacks at 0800 hours on 13 January 1945. Initially the combat commands were all committed immediately upon arrival in the area.

11. CCR was the only unit of the Division to reach Hatten. CCA and CCB were heavily engaged in Rittershofen and Northwest of Rittershofen.

12. Under similar conditions no change in missions and objectives could be assigned.

13. The battle at Hatten and Rittershofen certainly does not exemplify the proper use of an Armored Division. So far as I know the 14th Armored Division was the only Division available to VI Corps to stop the German attack.

14. There are many lessons to be learned from the action at Hatten and Rittershofen (as well as the battles of CCR in the Maritime Alps and the Vosges Mountains). The following are a few:

a. Armored Commanders most frequently cannot determine nor select the type of action in which their commands will be engaged.

b. All troops and all commanders should be basically trained as Infantry. During the fighting at Hatten elements of the 47th Tank Battalion, 94th Reconnaissance Squadron, 136th Ordnance and the 125th Engineers and the Signal Section were all employed as Infantry in some of the most vicious fighting of the European Campaign - some for as long as 10 days at one time.

c. All troops of an Armored Division should be trained to use all weapons of the Division (this had been done during the training days of the 14th Armored Division for the Armored Infantry Battalions, the 136th Ordnance Battalion and the 125th Engineer Battalion early in 1944 at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. I was severely criticized by II Army Inspectors for insisting on this training.

d. During the training phase of a Division small unit problems - squad, platoon, and company - should be conducted so as to permit several individuals to command the unit. Battle experience has shown us that small units change leaders many times - usually during an engagement on the field of battle.

e. Infantry-Tank training should be stressed even more, particularly in the matter of communication between the Infantry squad and the Tank crew.

f. The training for battle in World War II gave a wrong impression regarding the use of the reserve command in battle. Without exception CCR 14th AD was used as a separate combat command. The CCR headquarters had to be augmented the day after arrival in the European theater and only six days prior to its first combat. The battle at Hatten and Rittershofen could be discussed for days on end. Pertinent paragraphs of Field Manuals, Field Service Regulations and other pertinent data could be quoted and compared with the action as it actually took place. In my opinion this was just one more instance of too small a number of troops arriving on the field of battle too late.

If there is any additional information that I can furnish you,
please rest assured that I will be happy to do so.

Sincerely yours,

D. H. HUDELSON
Major General CAL NG